

Kate Elliott
Opponent Testimony
Senate Bill 23
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
Wednesday, February 26, 2019

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for allowing my testimony to be read on my behalf today. My name is Kate Elliott. I am a mother of two from Cincinnati. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 23.

This bill bans abortions at the detection of a fetal heartbeat, which could be as early as six weeks. I was actively trying to become pregnant, and still did not realize I was pregnant with my first child until I was nine weeks pregnant. I might have needed a monthly pregnancy test in order to detect my pregnancy within your criteria, and that sounds an awful lot like an undue burden.

I have multiple friends who desperately wanted to be mothers but sought abortions during a pregnancy due to unforeseen medical conditions. Their journeys were heartbreaking, and they mourn their lost children, but they remain grateful that they had a variety of healthcare options available to them for their unique situations. Many are now happy and healthy mothers. And I do not know if their specific medical situation would have qualified under your vaguely provided “health of the mother exception” because you know what? It’s none of my business. My friends, and every woman in this state, has a constitutional right to privacy—a right which you deny with this bill.

There are hundreds, thousands of factors taken into consideration when a woman seeks an abortion. Many of those factors are deeply personal, including medical history, and the government has no right to pry in order to determine whether her situation “qualifies” for a standard medical procedure.

I am appalled and outraged that you cannot see the government overreach committed in this bill. I implore you to protect a woman’s constitutional right to privacy in whatever medical treatment is best for herself and her family, according to her doctors and herself.

I also ask that you respect my freedom of religion as a practicing Unitarian Universalist. Reproductive justice is a deeply held tenet of our faith, which espouses the human right to have children, not to have children, to parent the children one has in healthy environments and to safeguard bodily autonomy. This belief aligns with the first, second, and sixth of our Seven Principles.

There is no proposed bill that I know of forcing anyone to receive an abortion. I respect a person’s freedom of religion and celebrate anyone’s choice to carry a child to term. But this bill strips UU’s of the ability to practice their faith and support women in their efforts to receive the healthcare that they need.

I ask you to consider my testimony. Reject government overreach. Protect freedom of religion. Vote NO on this dangerous bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

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For the person reading: Should anyone ask about the Seven Principles of UU, here they are, with the three most aligned with reproductive justice in bold:

1. **1st Principle**: The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. **2nd Principle**: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. **3rd Principle**: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. **4th Principle**: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. **5th Principle**: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. **6th Principle**: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7. **7th Principle**: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.